Research into feelings: The sentimental in literature, culture and politics

Whether it’s in youth or internet culture, in the media and entertainment landscape or the political arena – the sentimental is currently experiencing a renaissance. In this context, it is understood as a type of communicative code that can unfold its power in the interrelationship of seemingly private emotional worlds and their public display. In which variety and with which functions the sentimental is used (both consciously and unconsciously) is the subject of the research of a research training group at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU).

The research training group is led by Leibniz Prize winner Prof. Dr. Heike Paul, Chair of American Studies, focusing on North American literature and cultural studies. The Sentimental in Literature, Culture and Politics’ has recently been approved by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and is due to start in spring 2022.

The DFG has approved funding of around 76 million euros for 14 new research training groups over the course of four and a half years.

Just how relevant the topic of the new research training group is is reflected both by the often cited crisis in political communication and its new emphasis on feelings (not only) in Western democracies as well as in the use of sentimental register to evoke empathy and involvement for victims of humanitarian crises. The research programme is linked to an innovative programme for qualification and education – in addition to their scientific work, doctoral candidates will complete an internship of between three and six months at an extramural cooperation partner in order to gain insights into other fields.

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